

ELIANT

Avid readers of this newsletter over the last two years will have noticed frequent appeals for signatures for the ELIANT campaign. Now the good news. Just before Christmas we passed the million EU citizens signature total, which means we can present our results to the EU commission and get recognition as a Citizen's initiative under the terms of the 2000 Lisbon Treaty.

The goal is to work to ensure that legislative framework conditions in the EU are created to safeguard the various aspects of applied anthroposophy, including education, nutrition and agriculture, special needs (curative) education, social therapy, medicine and other therapeutic disciplines. ELIANT will campaign for policies and a European legislative framework, which give people real diversity of choice when making decisions that affect their quality of life and cultural diversity. For more information: www.eliand.eu/new/lang/en



ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD



The Alliance for Childhood in collaboration with ECSWE have just published *Improving the Quality of Childhood in Europe 2011* as a follow up to a earlier volume published in 2010. These books contain edited versions of talks given in the European Parliament that we have arranged on a two monthly basis and which have been given by experts for all over Europe on issues concerned with the quality of childhood and children's well being. It is a unique initiative supported by EU funds and copies are available from the ECSWE office in Forest Row for the cost of postage. All the chapters will appear on the Alliance for Childhood website www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk and ECSWE www.ecswe.org websites in the near future.

ECSWE



If you are interested in what is happening regarding Steiner Waldorf education around Europe ECSWE produces a regular thematic newsheet from the Forest Row office. You can receive this by application to ECSWE on the homepage. ECSWE's website has been updated and contains much information, including ground breaking education research regarding Steiner Waldorf Education and related findings under the WREN tab.

CHRISTOPHER CLOUDER - SWSF

Profile of a Steiner Alumnus

Paul Ransom is the Lead Consultant in Accident and Emergency at Brighton Hospital. He went to Michael Hall from 1967-1978, where he studied French, Music and English for A levels and went on to Cambridge University to do a degree in English and German. He excelled as a classical pianist and trained in performance at Trinity College, London.

He then travelled, working casually in Berlin and Central America. It was when he witnessed the civil war in Nicaragua that he decided to become a doctor and to specialise in emergency work.

Aged 26 Paul came back to England, took science GCSEs, and did a conversion course and medical degree at Manchester University. He was 32 when he qualified.

In addition to his work in Brighton, Paul spends a month a year working for the Halo Trust, a charity which specialises in the removal of landmines. This has taken him to Cambodia, Eritrea, Angola, Afghanistan and many other

countries to train local paramedics in how to treat the victims of mine explosions. Paul insists that his involvement with the Halo Trust is "play, not work. I get to go to wonderful places, meet lovely people, eat lots of weird things and hear great stories." He insists, "People always latch on to the Halo Trust as the glamorous part of my life, but working for the NHS is also immensely rewarding."

Paul has sent his own children to Michael Hall, and feels that the love and attention that the school always showed to languages and arts is increasingly shown towards science. Does he begrudge the imbalance in the curriculum in his school days? "I used to, but actually I really loved the arts as a young person. That was completely me then and I think Steiner education gave the confidence - the bounce - which enabled me to change course and choose medicine."

EMMA CRAIGIE - SWSF

Changes to SWSF and ECSWE offices

Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row

SWSF would like to thank Gerda Uelfer Woods for her 15 years of loyal service and wish her well in her retirement.

Lara Cousins is now working for the Publications Department (Bookshop) as well as the SWSF office. Lara has moved office into the Book Shop (only next door)! She can be contacted by email office@steinerwaldorf.org or tel: 01342 822115.

The old Fellowship office is now the ECSWE office. Working for ECSWE are Chiara Carones and Patrice Sullivan. ECSWE can be contacted at ecswe@waldorf.net or tel 01342 827792. Marion Briggs (The Alliance for Childhood) also shares this office and can be contacted on 01342 827793 or info@allianceforchildhood.org

Christopher Clouder continues to be based at Kidbrooke Park as a member of the Executive Group, SWSF, CEO of ECSWE and Founding Partner, Alliance for Childhood.

BOOKSHOP

Please take time to look at our website www.steinerwaldorf.org and follow the Bookshop link.

We are holding all prices until 1st April so do make the most of this.

Our new release DVD "The Gift of Learning" is very reasonably priced at just £4. This is a short film looking at some of the key features of a Steiner school.



DVD - "The Gift of Learning" £4.00

www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk

Newsletter

SPRING 2011



EARLY CHILDHOOD ACTIVITY 2010/2011

Once again, this has been a busy time for Steiner early childhood. Kindergartens and Parent and Child groups are thriving, with numbers increasing and there are a growing number of schools and settings who are interested in developing outdoor groups.

There are rising numbers of home based childcarers and the newly formed Birth to Three group are working with deepening their insight into this age, with the intention of building up a network of people contributing towards this valuable work.

Email dot@bowring-male.net for further information.

We have taken an active part in contributing to the review of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework for Birth to Five, which has had such an impact on our early childhood work with its added bureaucracy. Dame Claire Tickell and the Department For Education review team have been listening. They are aware that we have a basis in a worldwide and successful approach to early childhood, which needs to be respected and accepted without compromise.

How this will resolve itself or affect us in the future (including relief from having to apply for 'exemptions' to those areas of learning and

"Dame Claire Tickell and the Department For Education review team have been listening. They are aware that we have a basis in a worldwide and successful approach to early childhood, which needs to be respected and accepted without compromise"

development which we will not include in our kindergartens, such as IT/Electronic gadgetry and early introduction to formal learning) we shall see. We will know the outcome of the review in spring.

The National Early Childhood Conference in November 2010 was on the subject of Readiness for School. It was open for all teachers and therapists from schools and kindergartens and our lecturers approached it from the perspective of the

school doctor, class and kindergarten teacher in looking at the older child before transition to school.

The next conference in April 2011 addresses the theme of The Voice and Music. This is also the theme of KINDLING, the Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood. Email earlyyearsnews@aol.com for further information.

The Council of IASWECE, (International Kindergarten Association) met in Budapest last October, to work on the theme of the forthcoming World Kindergarten Teacher's Conference in Dornach, Switzerland: 1-5 April 2012. The Kindergartens in the UK have raised well over £1000 through donations and fundraising events, in order to help the Steiner Waldorf early childhood trainings, initiatives and projects in many countries where children are facing serious difficulties, or where Steiner education is just beginning. See www.iaswece.org

2011 promises to be an exciting and eventful year!

JANNI NICOL - SWSF EARLY CHILDHOOD REPRESENTATIVE
jnicol@steinerwaldorf.org



Picture: Cape Town Township, Educare Setting.

KINDLING archives



Ringwood Waldorf School looks forward to Class 11

The curriculum for Class 11, which offers an inspiring mix of main lessons, craft workshops and a full range of subject lessons, has now been presented to the Class 10 students and parents and everything is pointing towards Ringwood Waldorf School offering Class 11 from September 2011. The school is also fully engaged in the process of developing the European Waldorf Diploma with the hope that next year's Class 11 will be the first class to leave with the EWD. We will be the first school in England to offer the full Waldorf Curriculum, without the duality of also engaging in GCSEs and 'A' levels, to age 18 - an exciting prospect for students and teachers alike.

MAGGIE COELLO - RINGWOOD WALDORF SCHOOL

STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP (The Association of Steiner Waldorf Schools in the UK and Ireland)

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www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk info@swsf.org.uk Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowships Ltd. Produced by Christopher Clouder and Lara Cousins.

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Dying Sea, Thriving Children? - A Report from Europe

Should we care that the Baltic Sea is slowly dying? We can worry about the North Sea, the English Channel and the Irish Sea, but the Baltic? Too far away, not our concern. Surely we have to put up some borders between ourselves and our anxieties, we can't embrace every tragedy and catastrophe. Ask not for whom the bell tolls if it is out of ear-shot. Globalization means easy travel, cheap flights and strawberries out of season, not fashionable middle-class angst over a stretch of grey water that does not appear in our holiday plans.

If you agree with the above then you need not read any further, although you might like to consider this parallel: it could be said that childhood, like the Baltic, is dying, that the toxic impact of industrialized society is steadily degrading the child's inner resilience. The future of the Baltic Sea depends on the responsible co-operation of almost a dozen nations working against huge commercial and financial pressures. The future of childhood also calls for the committed co-operation of a wide range of adults and agencies, working against forces just as powerful and ominous as those that threaten the natural environment.

We will fight for our children. The Baltic might have to wait.

In the middle of January, with night time temperatures at minus 20, on the Baltic coast in Jarna, Sweden, delegates from Steiner schools from almost thirty European countries met for three days to move beyond borders and to unite in their concern for childhood. The European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE) can seem as distant and sound as appealing as Baltic algae blooms

when we are struggling with the problems on our doorstep. Why should we care that all the Steiner schools in Romania face closure because of a directive from the World Bank, or that more money is needed to secure quality training for Steiner teachers in East Africa and China? We have enough problems of our own.

Of course the moment we lift our gaze and raise our perspective we certainly do care. The world is now so small and the inter-connectedness of our different activities so glaringly evident that we cannot be parochial without actively cutting ourselves off and shutting ourselves away. ECSWE is just one of the arenas that enable our school movement to celebrate its connectedness. The sight of delegates from Latvia, Estonia, Armenia and the Ukraine sharing their experiences and challenges with the 'old-guard' nations such as Germany, Holland and the UK is moving indeed. Hearing how collaboration between European member schools is raising money for Chechen children, preparing innovative accreditation routes for school leavers, causing ripples in the European parliament, putting signatures to petitions that will protect all our freedoms is an inspiration to us all and a wonderful example to set for our children.

ECSWE is complex. ECSWE is heart-warming, ECSWE is a clumsy acronym for a wonderfully subtle exchange of endeavour and ideals. A comprehensive report of all the most recent ECSWE conference would fill several pages but would probably not include the following facts:

The KGB office where Vladimir Putin worked as a KGB operative is now a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten.



Picture: ECSWE members

Russia's award winning 'Teacher of the Year' works in school number 1060, otherwise known as the Steiner school

There are nearly 150,000 children attending Steiner schools across Europe.

There are more than sixty living languages within the European Union.

The future of Steiner education in Hungary and Romania is more at risk than at any time since 1989, for political and economic reasons respectively.

This is the year of the volunteer, something in which we, by necessity, are world experts.

Waldorf One World (WOW Day) raised over 272,000 Euros last year.

20% of children in the Sodertallje district of Sweden attend 'Free Schools', the majority of which are Steiner schools; it is officially 'the most creative municipality in Sweden'.

And, yes, the Baltic is dying. It will only survive if the national perspective of those nations that border it is replaced by one of collaboration, co-operation and shared endeavour. Just like childhood, in fact.

ALAN SWINDELL -
SWSF

Natural Disaster Buries Members of the School Vale de Luz

The SWSF have received the following from the Friends of Waldorf Education (Freunde der Erziehungskunst): Recently we have followed with a lot of concern and consternation the spread by the media about the landslides in Brazil. The natural catastrophe has hit the poorest of the poor thus destroying all of their material belongings and especially their shelter.

At the Friends of Waldorf Education we have just received an email from the Waldorf School in Nova Friburgo. In this email our correspondent describes the situation:

"Several families of our school community have disappeared in the disaster. Other families have lost literally everything and have to build everything "from zero". The school itself has not been destroyed, but serves as an emergency shelter to many directly affected people. During the first days after the disaster we have been out of light and all ways of communication.

After the first shock and the fear came the emergency actions especially from the city but also from the whole state of Rio de Janeiro. Lots of people are helping as volunteers. The firemen are still looking for victims. Lots of people lost

their houses or had to leave them since it could fall down anytime. Lots of places are welcoming these people, providing a temporary roof and food. Our Waldorf School, Vale de Luz, is one of these places.

After the time of immediate emergency, will follow the time of reconstruction, therefore our Association is diffusing a message to inform our friends and partners and raise some funds to help the families. As we receive the donations, we will invest them in the greatest needs."

Please help with your donation, in order to reduce the suffering and misery of affected families around the Waldorf School Vale de Luz. Thank you very much!



SWSF would like to thank the Friends of Waldorf Education for making donating to this very worthwhile cause simple. For further information on the Friends of Waldorf Education and their work please access www.freunde-waldorf.de/en/the-friends.html

Schools and individuals in the UK can donate via the details below:

Freunde der Erziehungskunst
IBAN: DE91 6001 0070 0039 8007 04
SWIFT / BIC: PBNKDEFFXXX
Postbank Stuttgart
(Please specify it is for Escola do Vale de Luz).

Alternatively, via the SWSF
Bank: HSBC Bank, 2 The Parade, Tadley. RG26 6LG
A/C: STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP
A/C no: 41191217
Sort code: 40-44-56
BIC MIDLGB2117W
IBAN: GB17MIDL40445641191217

Sterling cheques please make payable to SWSF and send to: Jane Avison, SWSF, 11 Church Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 7LH

CHRISTOPHER CLOUSER -
SWSF

The Mad Hatter's Tea Party, or Friends in Disguise?

Before Christmas I tried to watch the most recent film version of Alice in Wonderland. Johnny Depp was not the attraction, rather the location, the beautiful Anthony House near Plymouth. I was familiar with the house and its grounds and was curious to see it on screen. I grew tired of the film very quickly; this was not any kind of Lewis Carroll that I could warm to. Even the location was difficult to recognize, the line between CGI and reality was too blurred and all sense of subtlety and charm contained in the books was missing. In its defence I must admit that it did feel like going down a rabbit hole and ending up at a Mad Hatter's Tea Party, but I was ready for a more solid version of reality and conventional catering long before the end.

But within 24 hours there I was again, repeating the whole experience, not with Johnny Depp and co. but glued to a screen, struggling to recognise what should have been familiar landmarks, caught between reality and illusion, expanding and contracting giddily and being grinned at malevolently by any number of virtual cats. The context? Down the rabbit hole of the Internet, through the looking glass of the lap-top, down into the virtual underworld of the Waldorf Critics.

For any parents reading this who have not yet discovered for themselves let me spell it out: our schools are not perfect. Like all schools every where we make mistakes, we fall short of our ideals, we play host to human weakness and failings, we offend and disappoint each other; in short our schools are very much part of the real world with real-life problems and shortcomings. Of course there are tremendous positives: our schools inspire, uplift, give sense and meaning, create community and provide an education that can transform lives for the better. But once down the rabbit hole all that is forgotten. The internet has provided a forum for people to be critical and to disseminate their ideas broadly, swiftly and without any accountability, as we saw with the phenomenon of 'Wikileaks' before Christmas. Down there you can accuse anyone of anything.

Criticism of Steiner education via the internet began in earnest some years ago in America. The Waldorf Critics web-site gave a forum for concerns, frustrations and even anger that took the American schools by surprise. In time they started to engage with the phenomenon. Lead-critic Dan Dugan was invited to a teachers' conference, parents and teachers supportive of Steiner education began to add their voices and there is even a web-site in the USA, Americans4Waldorf, set up specifically to counter the attacks.

But who will you find at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party? What kind of person sits up until the early hours unpacking Steiner, anthroposophy, the curriculum, Ofsted reports on our schools, even articles like this one? It would be unfair to generalise, except to acknowledge that in any public forum, whether on-line, in the village hall or at Hyde Park Corner you will find

an uneasy alliance of recognisable types: those who have a grievance that still angers them, those who like a good shouting match, those of a more academic bent who have found an issue to contest. What you will find very few of, however, are those who have not already made their minds up.

At Plymouth University on the Steiner Waldorf BA we introduce our students to the critics' web-sites at an early stage in their studies and recommend them as a valuable resource. The students are often changed by the experience, sometimes angry with the rhetorical style of many critics, sometimes indignant at the claims being made. How could it be otherwise when you hear Anthroposophy described as a cult and Steiner as a racist or read that bullying is tolerated because it is a child's 'karma'! However, sometimes the students find themselves in agreement with some of the claims, identifying elements of the education that they also see as needing critical interrogation. The majority, if not all, return even more committed to this style of education, the exact opposite of what the critics would expect to achieve.

The debate within our schools and the SWSF on how to respond to internet critics is ongoing. Digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Mumsnet mean that they can reach a wider audience than ever before and in immediate response to breaking news: there is no doubt that any school advancing along the path toward Free School Status will become an immediate focus. At present there is a policy of non-engagement, not least because the alternative can waste a huge amount of time. We monitor and respond with simple statements that direct people to appropriate web-sites. This is probably experienced as dismissive and arrogant by some critics but it is not about to change, however we are always ready to respond to defamation, personal attacks and anything that would be deemed illegal outside of the internet. I would neither encourage nor discourage people to venture down the rabbit hole, there are parents, teachers, pupils and ex-pupils who do so and who presumably feel they are contributing to a worth-while debate. My own forays are always under-pinned by the belief that there is a grain of truth in all criticism, no matter how it is delivered. Get down there, get the gist, get out quickly and make your school a better place.

I returned to Anthony House recently. The film crews and the madness have gone, my memory of the film did not get in the way of me appreciating the beauty of it all; a bit like revisiting Steiner education after a time down the cyber-rabbit hole.

ALAN SWINDELL -
SWSF

WOW DAY 2011

We will be celebrating 150 years since the birth of Rudolf Steiner on 1st October, 2011.

In recognition of this Die Freunde in close cooperation with the ECSWE, who together started the WOW Day initiative, are proposing that all European schools take part in a global fundraising event to provide help to projects and children in need in less advantaged countries. We feel that this is a good opportunity for SWSF member schools to work collectively towards a goal of this sort.

The German school movement, having raised over 250000 euros in 2010, has committed to a full-scale fundraising drive on Michaelmas Day, 29th September. However, schools in UK and Ireland may wish to hold events or activities at any time in the autumn term that best suits your school and locality.

We feel sure you will want to take part and suggest that a representative from each school undertakes to co-ordinate an event to make this occasion. I have offered to be the representative on ECSWE for SWSF members and would ask for a named representative from your school, so that I can help and ensure that the WOW Day organisers are informed. I am asking each school wishing to take part to confirm the day that their fundraising will be held and what activity is planned. I will provide information as to how to pay funds raised at the end of the event. A useful link for WOW Day information is www.wowday.eu

This is an opportunity for all Steiner schools in Europe to demonstrate their solidarity and the positive contribution they can make to the world. We hope you will agree that concentrating on WOW Day during this year could be a valuable experience for your children as well as a force for good in providing much needed help to people living in far poorer circumstances than those we are used to in the privileged West. WOW events each year have made a great deal of difference to improve what the selected projects throughout the world are able to achieve.

We look forward to receiving the name of your chosen representative and if you have any queries or require further information in the meantime, please contact me.

Many thanks.

JANE AVISON -
SWSF
Email: admin@steinerwaldorf.org